

**NOTE: These minutes do not constitute a verbatim transcription of the CPC meeting.**

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
May 18, 2006**

**APPROVED**

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Arthur Simons in the Committee of the Whole Room, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, at 5:16 PM.

Roll Call: Present at the meeting were Commissioners Cason, Glenn, Simons, and Wendler. Absent were Commissioners Christensen (excused), Glaser (excused), Jeffrey (excused), Smith (excused) and Williams.

Quorum: In absence of a quorum, the meeting was conducted as a committee of the whole.

Agenda: In absence of a quorum, action on the request of Strather Associates to rezone the area of Lindsay, W. Outer Dr., Santa Maria and Biltmore from R1 to PD was tabled to the CPC meeting of June 1, 2006.

PUBLIC HEARING-- Request of Belmont Shopping Center LLC to rezone northeast corner of Conant and Pointer from P1 to B4: A public hearing was held on the request of Belmont Shopping Center LLC to rezone the northeast corner of Conant Ave. and Pointer Street from a P1 (Open Parking District) zoning classification to a B4 (General Business District) zoning classification for the construction of a commercial building.

CPC staff member Kathryn Underwood reviewed the background information, surrounding zoning and land use, and rationale for the rezoning.

The subject property, which is approximately 2.5 acres in size, is currently a paved underutilized parking area to the rear of the Belmont Shopping Center at E. Eight Mile Road and Conant/Dequindre. The petitioner intends to construct a commercial building on the subject property, and is in the process of exploring possible restaurant, retail and/or service interests. The current zoning classification of P1 does not allow for the construction of commercial/retail structures. The proposed B4 zoning classification will allow for the construction of a commercial/retail structure and corresponds to the zoning classification of the existing commercial structures at the shopping center.

The subject area is located in the Pershing Subsector of the North Sector of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The recommended future general land use designation is GC – General Commercial.

The CPC office received one telephone call from Shirley Burch of Community United for Progress in support of the rezoning and two letters from Mrs. Mildred Kyles and a representative of Rose of Sharon, Church of God in Christ, in support of the proposal.

Thomas Petzold of Belmont Shopping Center LLC noted that the plan for construction is conceptual at this time, but would probably consist of the building of one single structure with multiple tenants. The subject property is paved but unused. Parking for the shopping center is predominantly off of 8 Mile Rd. Ms. Underwood noted that the frontage of the shopping center is on 8 Mile.

Commissioner Simons inquired as to whether patrons are able to walk to the shopping center. Mr. Petzold responded affirmatively. Belmont Shopping Center LLC has replaced the sidewalk along Conant from Pointer to 8 Mile Rd.

Commissioner Glenn noted the location of a senior citizens complex on Dequindre between 8 Mile Rd. and Outer Drive. He inquired as to whether any zoning changes are proposed for the residential area. Ms. Underwood responded negatively. The subject area is 2.5 acres in size. There is a lot of buffering between the residential and commercial activities, including the Dad Butler Playfield.

In response to Commissioner Simons, Mr. Petzold noted that the community raised over \$.5 million to renovate the Dad Butler Playfield. Renovations were completed last year; the playfield was dedicated in August 2005.

The following persons spoke at the public hearing.

Shirley Burch, 19607 Dequindre, Community United for Progress, expressed support noting that the commercial will be an asset to the area. Mr. Burch noted that Mr. Petzold was instrumental in raising the funds to renovate the playfield. She felt he has also been considerate of the surrounding community.

The matter was taken under advisement.

PUBLIC  
HRG.—  
Master  
Plan  
amendment  
for area of  
Gratiot and  
Van Dyke:

A public hearing was held on the request of the Planning & Development Department (P&DD) to amend the Detroit Master Plan of Policies for the vicinity of Gratiot and Van Dyke Avenues to accommodate the construction of a neighborhood shopping center.

CPC staff member Kimberly Haygood presented background information and a description of the amendment.

In 2005 Grand Van Dyke LLC submitted a request to rezone property generally bounded by Whipple, Van Dyke, Gratiot, and the alley east of Baldwin from R2 (Two Family Residential District) and B4 (General Business District) to B3 (Shopping District) to allow for the development of a neighborhood shopping area. On July 21, 2005, the CPC held a public hearing on the proposed rezoning and recommended approval on September 8, 2005. On November 18, 2005, City Council approved the rezoning. At the time of the CPC public hearing, P&DD stated the proposed rezoning was inconsistent with the Master Plan of Policies. P&DD indicated that it would prepare an amendment so that the generalized proposed land use designation for the area that was involved in the rezoning would be consistent with the proposed development for the area.

The purpose of the proposed change to the Master Plan is to enhance the commercial presence in the area by allowing the construction of a neighborhood shopping center featuring a 26,000 square foot replacement grocery store, 24,000 square feet of additional retail space, parking, and landscaping on the four-acre site, including frontage along Gratiot.

The subject area, which once contained housing, is now vacant and is proposed as the site, along with the adjacent Gratiot frontage, of the new neighborhood shopping center. The Foodtown Grocery store, currently is located along Gratiot Avenue, but the developer's proposal for a new shopping area requires additional space, which would cause the project area to project further north into the area currently designated for residential uses.

Bruce Evans noted that the proposed amendment involves a change to the East Sector, Kettering Subsector Generalized Proposed Land Use Map for the area bounded by Whipple on the north, Van Dyke Avenue on the east, the alley north of Gratiot Avenue on the south, and the alley east of Baldwin on the west. The area is currently designated as RL (Low Density Residential). The area would be changed to reflect a GC (General Commercial) proposed land use designation. The development will bring about a higher and better use of land in the area. The amendment will accommodate the development and support the Department's policy of encouraging development of commercial nodes at major intersections.

Commissioner Glenn noted that Gratiot Ave. and other thoroughfares have a lot of vacant store frontages. He questioned whether these thoroughfares would be changed to residential instead of remaining B2. Mr. Evans noted that P&DD is not saying that for Gratiot Ave. However, for other areas, P&DD is asking that they be downgraded to accommodate residential as well as commercial.

City Council Member Alberta Tinsley-Talabi expressed her support for the project and the amendment. She noted the recent creation of the Gratiot Avenue Business Association, which considers Gratiot Avenue to be the gateway to downtown Detroit. A student from the University of Michigan is working with the Association on attracting businesses to the area. They are working towards securing high quality developments similar in quality to developments by Michael Curis.

The matter was taken under advisement.

OLD  
BUS.--  
Greektown  
Casino:

CPC staff members Gregory Moots and Marcell Todd presented an update on the development proposal for the permanent Greektown casino complex.

New drawings depicting changes to the design and site layout were included in the CPC table packets. Most of the changes are the result of value engineering of the project. The changes include the deletion of the basement level of the hotel, deletion of the basement level of the parking garage, modification of the parking garage facade, deletion of the moving sidewalk, reduction of the number of stair towers on the south side of the parking garage to one; reduction in the size of the hotel rooms to reflect the narrowing of the hotel tower, deletion of the hotel ballroom level, not reskinning the Beaubien elevation of

the casino, not constructing a new employee dining room, possible elimination of the skywalk between the hotel and the casino, and constructing only a shell for the build-out of the northeast corner of the casino, making provision for the retail along the Monroe frontage. Other interim solutions for the build out area include fencing off the area for surface parking, creating a greenbelt along the sidewalk and developing a small pocket park.

CPC staff noted that the traffic issue is still not fully resolved. Meetings have been held between the Casino, the City's traffic engineers and the Michigan Department of Transportation (M-DOT). The entrance to the parking garage will still likely be from the I-375 service drive, but whether it would be located in the middle of the structure or at the southern edge is still under discussion. It has been determined that the I-375 southbound service drive will be closed at Macomb Street, with all traffic being forced off onto Macomb Street westbound. A right-hand turn from the Lafayette ramp onto Macomb is also provided for. CPC staff is awaiting a final determination from the M-DOT.

Marvin Beatty, President, Greektown Casino, LLC and Geoffrey Harrison of SDG, architect for the project, responded to questions regarding the reasons for the changes.

Commissioner Cason questioned whether the changes are being proposed in order to cut construction costs. He inquired as to the difference in costs between the newly proposed design and the one presented to the Commission on April 6, 2006.

Mr. Beatty responded that the changes represent options. There aren't any amendments to take away any elements of the complex. The Casino is moving very quickly to meet a time frame with an opening date of September 2008. Consequently, the LLC is looking at the design in greater depth relative to budget issues and cost. The presentation of the Casino has not significantly changed to warrant concern. The LLC is looking at a number of different possibilities as a result of value engineering, but nothing has been finally concluded. The LLC is looking at a new concept of "hotel" completely new to this area. The LLC is not looking for a short cut, but instead looking at providing innovative things to Greektown and to the State.

A copy of the design approach for the Greektown Hotel was included in the CPC table packet.

In response to Commissioner Cason, Mr. Beatty noted that the moving sidewalk is being deleted. The moving sidewalk was part of a previous design concept which sited the hotel across the street. Because the hotel is not being constructed across the street, there is no need to provide the sidewalk as travel distance between the two components has lessened. The moving sidewalk had thus become a cost element.

Mr. Beatty noted modifications to the parking garage. The change to the windows will not affect the visual aesthetic. The modification simplifies the windows. Part haste and other considerations drove the previous designs.

Mr. Beatty noted that the Casino does not want to return to say it is going to change its entire plan. But the Casino wanted the opportunity to say what could potentially happen. Many of the elements of design are still very possible. The worst-case scenario is that some of the elements may not be built in time for the opening of the casino, but could be built later. Those components would be part of the development plan as it moves forward.

Commissioner Cason inquired as to whether or not the casino would include a ballroom. Mr. Beatty responded affirmatively. The ballroom would be located in the Entertainment Center venue. After analyzing and concluding that casinos are built to move patrons through the gaming space, the LLC moved the ballroom into the entertainment facility. The hotel will have banquet space for 250 people.

Commissioner Cason inquired as to whether an employee dining room would be constructed. Mr. Beatty noted that a new employee dining room is not being proposed at this time. The casino already has an employee dining room.

Commissioner Wendler stated that she liked the design without the skywalk. She also expressed support for the clear glass at the corner of the casino building at Lafayette and St. Antoine, which would offer visibility into and out of that space. Mr. Beatty noted that that has not been changed.

Commissioner Simons inquired as to how the deletion of the basement would affect parking. Mr. Beatty noted that the deletion would result in the loss of 50 parking spaces. Fifty spaces are not critical to meeting parking requirements. The Casino is still providing well over the amount required by the Zoning Ordinance.

Citing security concerns, Commissioner Glenn expressed support for the elimination of one of two elevators from the parking garage. He inquired as to whether surveillance cameras would be installed throughout the garage. Mr. Beatty responded affirmatively.

The matter was taken under advisement.

CPC  
Director  
Selection  
Process:

Mr. Loper presented an update on the CPC Director selection process.

A revised version of the City Planning Commission Director job announcement as submitted to the City Council was included in the CPC table packets. This version reflected the Commission's directions at the May 4, 2006 CPC meeting to include language regarding residency as suggested by Council's Research and Analysis Division. City Council is expected to again consider the announcement at its May 22, 2006 meeting.

Deputy  
Director's  
Report:

Mr. Loper presented the Deputy Director's report.

The CPC table packets included curriculum and registration information on Michigan State University Extension's Citizen Planner Program for Wayne County being held June 1-29, 2006. Commissioners interested in attending the land use training and certificate program were requested to contact the CPC office.

The terms of Commissioners Simons, Glenn, and Jeffrey are to expire on June 30, 2006. All three are interested in reappointment. City Council has agreed to schedule interviews for City Planning Commission appointments during the week of June 5.

The CPC table packets included information from the Michigan Department of Transportation in response to Commission requests at the May 4 presentation on the Ambassador Bridge/Gateway Project.

Commissioner Glenn inquired as to whether a response has been received from the Law Department relative to the demolition lien program. Mr. Loper noted that some information has been received. However, City Council has been in budget deliberations for the past few weeks and has not yet scheduled any other business items. The CPC office has not received a direct response from the Law Department, but information has been exchanged amongst various departments.

In response to Commissioner Glenn, Mr. Loper noted that City Council voted on the 2006-2007 Community Development Block Grant/Neighborhood Opportunity Fund program. City Council did not follow the Commission's recommendation to support funding in the amount of \$4 million for the senior emergency home repair program. City Council voted to remove \$1 million from that program and place it back into the City-wide low-moderate income home repair program.

The Mayor is planning to restore the bulk pick-up program for fiscal year 2006-2007. The program is estimated to cost \$9.3 million and will be operated quarterly. Yard waste placed in paper bags would be collected on a weekly basis during regular garbage pick-up dates. Detroit property owners would still have to pay for the weekly garbage pick-up.

Brief discussion ensued on the impact of the garbage pick up fee on seniors and others with limited resources.

Adj.:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.